

# News

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**from** the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee  
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*EDITOR'S NOTE: The EOC meeting will begin at 1 p.m., Monday in Room 101 of the Solomon Blatt Building (corner of Assembly and Pendleton streets). A copy of the full study, "A Performance Analysis of South Carolina's Gifted and Talented," is available on the EOC Web site at [www.sceoc.org](http://www.sceoc.org) under "News."*

## **Study examines performance of gifted and talented students in South Carolina**

*Gifted and talented students outperform students not served but few students provided with gifted and talented services in underperforming schools*

**Columbia** – Although 19 percent of South Carolina's students in grades 3-8 are served by gifted and talented programs, there is not an even distribution of programs across the state's districts and schools revealed a study released Monday by the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee (EOC).

The study, "A Performance Analysis of South Carolina's Gifted and Talented" uses results of the 2005 Palmetto Achievement Challenge Tests (PACT), administered to students in grades 3-8, to examine the performance of students served by gifted and talented programs compared to those not served. The study also examines how gifted and talented students, academic and artistic, are identified and served in South Carolina.

Overall, the study found that gifted and talented students outperform students not served by any gifted and talented program in all four PACT subject areas, English Language Arts (ELA), Math, Social Studies, and Science. Gifted and talented students perform well in PACT mathematics and PACT science, but relatively poor in PACT ELA.

EOC Director of Statistical Analyses and Programming Tomonori Ishikawa, who presented the study, stated that students served by Gifted and Talented programs, when compared to students not served, have the highest percentage of their scores at the *Advanced* performance level for all subject areas except ELA. On average, these students achieve their highest performance levels in math and science.

“The record of achievement in mathematics is noteworthy but many of these students were identified because they had a record of achievement in reading and/or math,” said Ishikawa. “The relatively poor performance in ELA among gifted and talented students should be explored since many of these students are identified for gifted and talented programs by Advanced level achievement in ELA at grade 3. Why is performance slipping as students advance through the grades?”

Echoing the findings of the EOC’s fourth annual achievement gap study, the gifted and talented analysis found that there are statistically-significant achievement gaps among different groups of students served by gifted and talented programs as well as students not served by the program. The achievement gaps are narrower for gifted and talented populations for white, Hispanic, and other ethnicity students compared to the corresponding not-served populations. In contrast, for African American student groups, the gifted and talented achievement gaps are wider in math, science, and social studies than the not-served achievement gaps.

The study also reveals that the distribution of gifted and talented students is not evenly distributed across the state’s school districts, where roughly 40 percent of schools have 30 or fewer students served by a gifted and talented program. Students served by gifted and talented programs make up as few as two percent of all students in the Lee county school district (25 of 1219 students) to as many as 38 percent of all students in York 4 (1208 of 3172 students.)

Furthermore, a correlation between the Absolute ratings on the district report cards and the percentage of all students participating in gifted and talented programs is noted within the study. On average, districts rated *Unsatisfactory* in 2005 have the lowest percentage of students served by gifted and talented programs. In contrast, districts rated *Excellent* have the highest percentage of students.

Ishikawa cited several issues which arise from the disparity in the percentage and number of students served by gifted and talented programs.

“Serving the often small concentrations of students identified as gifted and talented introduces challenges in resource allocation, choice of program model, and choice of curriculum,” said Ishikawa. “Each of these issues can affect student performance.”

“Even if gifted and talented programs had low fixed costs, the demands of this service structure would impose material, teaching and administrative resource allocations challenges,” stated Ishikawa. “Without a critical mass of students, even choosing the appropriate program model becomes more difficult as options which would work in schools and districts with larger numbers of gifted and talented students become infeasible in a smaller-size setting.”

This report is the second in a two-part series looking at South Carolina’s Gifted and Talented Program. In June 2005, “A Descriptive Study of South Carolina’s Gifted and Talented Program,” was conducted by the South Carolina Educational Policy Center. The report can be found online at [www.sceoc.org](http://www.sceoc.org).

*The EOC is an independent, non-partisan group made up of 18 educators, business persons, and elected officials who are appointed by legislative leaders and the governor to monitor and review the implementation of the 1998 South Carolina Education Accountability Act, the Education Improvement Act, and the K-12 system.*

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